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**U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare**  
**Public Health Service**





## ON THE SUBJECT OF A HEALTH-ESTABLISHMENT

FOR

*The City of Philadelphia.*

AT a time when the best interests of our city lie prostrate, and the public mind is still smarting from the lash of past calamities, it is natural and becoming to indulge reflections respecting the future. In no other way can we profit by the salutary lessons of experience and observation; in no other way can that wisdom acquired under the harsh but instructive discipline of misfortune, direct us to the means of preventing the recurrence of similar evils; and, I will be pardoned for adding, on no other ground can we support our pretensions to the proud but much abused name of rational beings. Perhaps few occasions have occurred more apposite than the present, for reducing these general positions to practice.

The strange scenes and transactions of the period of alarm and confusion which has just elapsed, are pregnant with choice instruction, and if we fail to make the proper use and application of it, the fault is in ourselves, and must be ascribed either to our neglect or want of discernment. It will be readily perceived, that I allude to certain proceedings relative to the late malignant fever, from the supposed dangers of which, popular rumour, co-operating with the influence of an *official memorial*, drove our citizens to take refuge in the country. It is not my intention to pass a censure on the *character* of the board delegated to watch over the health of Philadelphia. This would lead me to arraign the *motives* of the gentlemen who compose it, which I am persuaded are pure, honest and upright. But I am unable to review the catalogue of official measures which that body adopted during the late period of our distresses, without feeling and cherishing sentiments of disapprobation.

Notwithstanding the frightful reports of sickness, which with their gloomy train of concomitants, spread with such rapidity through the city and country, there are thousands ready to concur with me in opinion, that we have had, during the present season, but very little if any ground for *public* alarm on this score, while every one must acknowledge, that the alarm which issued from the office of the board of health about the beginning of August, was rash, precipitate, and out of all proportion to the cause which then existed. It is worse than common error, it is an imposition fatal in its consequences to say, as some have done, that the rapid flight of our citizens, which succeeded this event, broke the chain of communication, and by that means prevented the spreading of disease. In the year 1798 the depopulation of the city by flight far exceeded any thing we have since witnessed, yet had it no effect in arresting the course of the dreadful epidemic of that season. It must be fresh in the remembrance of every one who was accurate in his observations, that on that occasion the disease overran neighbourhoods containing *but few inhabitants* no less rapidly than such as had *many*. It did not even attain to the height of its career till the month of September, at which time the population in every part of the city was much more diminished than it has been during the present year. On that melancholy occasion Philadelphia was desolated by a true *epidemic*, whereas during the season just terminated, we have had nothing but *sporadic cases* of a disease, from which neither we nor any other large city in the United States, can expect to enjoy an entire exemption during the summer

and autumnal months. We have experienced what is called, in common language the "*fall fever of the city*", an evil to which we must for ever expect to be subject, till we acquire the means of counteracting the natural effects of season and climate.

But I repeat, that I am far from ascribing improper and unworthy motives to the gentlemen who compose our board of health. I consider their memorial of alarm already mentioned, with the want of wisdom and consistency displayed in many of their subsequent measures, as nothing more than evidences of their incompetency to discharge the duties of their appointment. Had it been possible for them to have gone even farther astray than in some instances they did, I should still have held myself bound to regard them as deluded not as voluntary agents of mischief. Nor is it either criminal or disgraceful in men to be found defective in qualifications for an office entirely new to them, and on which they entered not of choice, but in obedience to the suffrages of their fellow-citizens. All the public has a right to expect from such characters is, an honest, prompt, and faithful attention to what they conscientiously believe to be their duty, either on the credit of their own deliberations, or of advice recieved from others in whose judgement they have reason to confide. In matters of this kind, the only effectual security against error and mischief lies in selecting to places of trust none but persons duly qualified by means of previous education and habits.

At the close of the next session of the legislature of our Commonwealth, terminates by its own limitation the "Act for establishing an Health Office for the city and port of Philadelphia." This is the instrument which gives existence to our board of health, prescribes the principles and mode of their nomination and appointment, and sketches the general outline of their official conduct. As it is scarcely probable that we will be left altogether destitute of a legal establishment in relation to the health of our city, either the same act will be continued in its present form, or with such alterations and amendments as may appear adviseable, or else one entirely new will be substituted in its place. Which of these expedients may, in the issue of things, recieve a preference, it is not for me to hazard a prediction. But, be the matter as it may, considerations both of self-interest and public good render it incumbent on every Philadelphian, however humble and contracted his means, to contribute by the last exertion of his abilities, to shed light on a subject of such general importance, and so closely connected with his personal welfare.

Impressed by these sentiments, but without either aspiring to the character of a legislator, or making pretension to a higher share of knowledge than the rest of my fellow-citizens, I shall offer a few remarks on what I conceive to be errors and deficiencies in our present health law, and at the same time endeavour to unfold certain principles which such an instrument ought to embrace. But, previously to entering on the immediate discussion of these points, it is requisite to lay down a few preliminary observations, to render what may follow more easily understood.

An establishment intended to preserve the health of Philadelphia should, as far as practicable, extend to every source of malignant disease. that may, under any usual combination of circumstances, become epidemic. Provided complaints prove general and mortal among our citizens. it is of little import whether they arise from putrid exhalation or animal contagion, whether they be of foreign or domestic origin. In either case their occurrence is equally to be deprecated, and ought to be guarded against with equal vigilance. In either case their prevention should be carefully provided for, in a system established for the preservation of health. If, in any instance, a doubt arise in the public mind, whether an epidemic disease which threatens frequently to return. be the offspring of foreign or domestic causes, the only wise and en-

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\* Every physician of observation must know, and every one of candour will acknowledge, that the *Fall Fever of the city* is as different from the *Autumnal Remittent of the country*, as the dress, manners, and habits of a full-bred citizen are from those of a plain country farmer. Things attain to a state of refinement and sublimation in the city to which the country is wholly a stranger.

lightened policy consists in erecting suitable and efficient barriers against danger from either quarter. But this is more particularly the case should it appear probable that both sources unite, and produce the mischief by mutual co-operation. Under such circumstances, safety can be ensured only, by a system of caution and defence judiciously directed against the secret intrigues and open assaults of the enemies both within and without.

This latter presumption (I mean that which embraces the agency of both internal and external causes) seems to harmonize most with public opinion respecting the origin and propagation of the malignant epidemics by which Philadelphia has been repeatedly visited within the last ten years. I forbear to express my own private opinion on this subject, convinced that the sentiments of an anonymous individual could have but little weight in either changing, modifying, or confirming those impressions which my fellow-citizens have long since received and cherished. As far as I have been able to inform myself respecting a matter so extremely precarious, the predominant belief among the inhabitants of Philadelphia now is, that our late epidemics have been originally introduced in vessels from foreign ports, and afterwards propagated among us through the medium and instrumentality of a vitiated atmosphere. This vitiation is acknowledged to be peculiar to cities, and to arise from the filth with which their streets, docks, sewers, and other places are suffered to be polluted. The testimony in favour of each branch of this hypothesis must be confessed to be specious and plausible. The leading articles of it may be summed up in the following manner.

Our late epidemics have *generally* appeared first along our wharves, and in the neighbourhood of vessels among the crews of which similar diseases had previously prevailed. In some instances persons who had been either on board such vessels, or in their immediate vicinity have been numbered among the earliest victims of disease. These circumstances seem to concur in support of a belief in the doctrine of importation. But, on the other hand, the malignant complaints in question, even after having gained a footing, are known to have raged with violence only in situations abounding in filth. They have never spread either in the pure air of the country, or in the high, cleanly, and well ventilated parts of large cities. They are further known never to prevail in the winter season, but to be arrested in their progress as soon as the process of putrefaction in the open air is checked, and the atmosphere depurated of septic effluvia by the occurrence of frost. From these and other similar facts and considerations it is obvious, that to the prevalence of a malignant epidemic, a vitiated atmosphere is at least as necessary as imported poison.

Let us, then, discard all narrow views, all party and impassioned prejudices, which have hitherto misled the public mind on this subject, and, for the sake of harmony, and effective measures of prevention, accede to what appears to be, if not the result of philosophical discussion, at least the dictates of common observation. Let us admit, that though evil may threaten us from without, yet the foe has within our own walls, and even around our dwellings, a host of auxiliaries anxiously waiting his invasion to enroll themselves under his destructive banner. This view of things, provided we realize it in its full force, will induce us to extinguish the rage of party animosity, and unite in common exertions, against the machinations of a common enemy. It will impress on us the necessity, not only of repelling open hostility from abroad, but also of crushing the secret and more dangerous intrigues of domestic corruption. In vain does an enemy attempt the conquest of a country where he finds no succour in the defection of any of its inhabitants. Purity of principle and union in measures of defence have nothing to dread from the most powerful assailants. In like manner, it is literally impossible that yellow fever should ever overrun our city unless it be aided by internal agents. For, whatever be the source from which this disease springs, whether septic exhalation, or secreted contagion, it is known to be an evil that thrives only in a contaminated atmosphere. When removed to the pure air of the country it languishes and dies without issue.

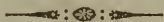
Admitting yellow fever, then, to be really contagious and of foreign origin, the first object of our health establishment should be, to erect, as far as practicable, sufficient barriers against its introduction. But, as contagion is a sub-

tle and invisible agent, and may gain admission through channels unperceived and even unsuspected, another object no less important is, to adopt such measures, that, even when admitted among us it may prove innoxious. These measures consist in taking every practicable step to purge the atmosphere of the city, and assimilate it in purity to the atmosphere of the country. The accomplishment of this end, though plain and simple in its principles, is somewhat arduous in point of execution. The air of particular places bears a close affinity to the nature of the places themselves. For our atmosphere, instead of consisting of air alone, is a heterogeneous compound, containing effluvia from all surrounding objects, capable of being volatilized under the temperature of our seasons. In order to assimilate the atmosphere of the city to that of the country, it is necessary to render the two places as nearly alike as possible in their general scenery, and the nature of things they contain. The country abounds in vegetation and streams of running water, and is polluted with but a small quantity of putrefying filth. But, with regard to the city, the case is precisely reversed. It contains large quantities of putrefying substances, little vegetation, and no constant streams of pure water. From this simple statement the inference must be obvious to the capacity of every one. Putrid substances are known to be active in contaminating, and streams of water and vegetables in a living state, in depurating the atmosphere to some distance around them. Hence the principle sources of the difference between the purity of the air in the city and in the country. As the purifying and contaminating sources in the two places bear an inverse proportion to each other, the atmospheres must be necessarily marked by a corresponding diversity.\*

I repeat again, that I do not mean to offer an opinion respecting the origin of yellow fever. My intention is, not to provoke and render more inveterate, but, if possible, to moderate and assuage the spirit of party on this subject, which has already risen to an inordinate height, and been productive of incalculable mischief to our city. While the advocates of domestic origin will not object to an external quarantine under wise and proper regulations, those who believe in the importation of yellow fever can neither deny the influence of vitiated air in facilitating its propagation, nor oppose from laudable motives the establishment of an efficient system of internal cleanliness. If these opposite parties have not suffered their desire of victory to gain an ascendancy over their attachment to the welfare of Philadelphia, they will not refuse, on the summons of both reason and interest, to renounce their fruitless and distracting controversies, and unite in common efforts to guard against the ravages of a common enemy.

Such appear to be the general spirit and views which ought to pervade a health law calculated to harmonize with public opinion, and to secure to our city an exemption from malignant disease. In my future numbers our present health establishment will undergo a brief examination, and be compared, as to its leading features, with the principles and sentiments here expressed.

A PHILADELPHIAN.



It was observed in my first number, that a health-establishment for the city of Philadelphia ought to embrace two principal and distinct branches. By means of an external and well regulated quarantine it should provide against the introduction of malignant disease from foreign places through the channels of commerce; and, to obviate the propagation of such disease, in case of its being accidentally suffered to gain admission, as well as to prevent its generation by the agency of internal causes, it should organize and enforce a strict and extensive system of domestic cleanliness. Competent provision being made

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\* In order to destroy, as far as possible this diversity and obviate all its physical consequences, let us introduce into our yards, gardens and streets as much vegetation as practicable, let us by means of our hydrants convert our gutters for a few hours every day, during the summer and autumn, into streams of pure water, and remove to a distance every putrid and offensive substance.

and carried into effect on these heads, nothing would be left on the score of prevention to exercise wisdom or call forth exertion.

Let us briefly examine some of the leading features of our existing health law, and compare them with these simple and substantial tests. The first thing that attracts our attention in this instrument is, *the nature, and mode of appointing*, the board of health, which, when appointed, is invested with the powers both of a deliberative and an executive council. In the first section of the law, these points are laid down and provided for in the following words.

"The present board of managers of the marine and city hospitals shall nominate twenty four persons, fourteen of whom shall be resident in the city of Philadelphia, four within the Northern Liberties, four within the district of Southwark and two within the township of Moyamensing; the Mayor or Recorder and Aldermen of the city of Philadelphia, or any four of them, the Mayor or Recorder being one, and the Justices of the Peace of the county of Philadelphia residing within the Northern Liberties, the district of Southwark, and township of Moyamensing, or any three of them shall meet on the last Monday in December in every year, and appoint *twelve* of the persons so nominated by the board of managers of the marine and city hospitals" &c. &c.

There are two things essentially necessary to give a law effect and utility. The law itself must not only be wisely framed, but executed by officers sufficiently enlightened respecting the objects of it, to be able to carry its injunctions and provisions to a proper extent, without rendering it unnecessarily oppressive. If there be a deficiency in either of these points, the law is in general worse than a nullity. But of a palpable deficiency in the latter of them, we have a striking example in the instance before us. Our board of health now consists, and during the present establishment, will always consist of men of common minds, common educations, and common acquirements. But the leading objects of the law they are appointed to execute are exclusively of a scientific and professional nature. How then is it possible for such characters to deliberate with wisdom, and act with effect, on subjects, the very elements of which are wholly unknown to them? A few specimens of the extensive and important discretionary powers vested in our board of health, will set this matter in so clear and forcible a point of view, that it must necessarily be understood and felt by every one. In the first section of the health law it is declared, that

"The said board (of health) shall have full power to make general rules, orders, and regulations for the government and management of the Lazaretto, and the vessels, cargoes, and persons under quarantine, and the health office and public hospitals, and for prescribing the mode of visiting and examining vessels, persons, and houses, &c."

Again, Section 4th, the commander, second officer, or any person, on board a ship anchored near the Lazaretto, shall answer on oath or affirmation to the quarantine master or resident physician, "all such questions touching the health of the crew and passengers during the voyage, and the nature of the cargo, as *the board of health, by their rules, shall, from time to time direct to be asked.*" In the case of infection and sickness on board of a vessel, "*the board of health shall determine and direct what measures shall be pursued in order to purify the vessel and cargo, and restore the health of the diseased persons on board,*" &c.

All vessels arriving at the Lazaretto from tropical latitudes and certain other places specified in the 5th section of the health law, from the fifteenth day of May till the first day of October, shall "there discharge the whole of their cargoes and ballast, which, together with the vessels, bedding, clothing, and every other article on board, which may be *supposed* (by the board of health) *capable of retaining infection*, shall be perfectly cleansed and purified, under the direction of the resident physician and quarantine master, *agreeably to such rules and regulations as the board of health shall, from time to time direct for that purpose,*" &c. Again, whenever the board of health may apprehend that the city would be endangered by a vessel from the Levant or any other place where the plague frequently prevails, entering our port, "they shall have full power and autho-

rity to detain (at the Lazaretto) and unlade the said vessel, and *cause such measures to be taken as will be conducive to the purification of such vessel, and of the persons and cargo on board thereof.*"

"Sec. 15. *And be further enacted,* That when any vessel shall come up to the city of Philadelphia, or the shores of Southwark or the Northern Liberties, in the river Delaware, (although the said vessel may have obtained a certificate of health from the resident physician and quarantine master or consulting physician,) if the said vessel shall appear to the *board of health* to be infected with any contagious disorder, dangerous to the community, the said board are hereby authorised to order the said vessel to the Lazaretto, there to undergo the necessary purification, before she shall be permitted to return to the city or shores aforesaid; and the said board are also hereby authorized and empowered to remove any vessel or vessels from such part of the city or shores aforesaid as shall be infected with such disorders as aforesaid, to such convenient distance *as they may deem proper*, although such vessel may not be infected."

Sec. 23. *And be it further enacted,* That it shall be the duty of the said board of health to cause all offensive or putrid substances and all nuisances which may have a tendency, *in their opinion*, to endanger the health of the citizens to be removed from the streets, lanes, alleys, &c. &c. and to cause such privies to be emptied or corrected with lime, as the *said board shall from time to time deem necessary for the health of the inhabitants.*"

Such are a few instances, selected from among many, of the high and important discretionary powers delegated by law to the board of health. The objects of these powers, as already remarked, are decidedly of a philosophical and professional nature. They are, *the laws, nature, and mode of eradicating, imparted contagion, and a decision as to the kind of domestic nuisances, which threaten the production of malignant disease.* But men who have been professionally bred, and who have devoted the best portion of their lives to medical and philosophical researches, acknowledge these to be among the most difficult points of investigation. How, then can common characters, without the aid of either literature, profession, or study, and engaged for a subsistence in mechanical or mercantile pursuits, either judge with wisdom or act with consistency on such subjects? I do not mean to convey sentiments of disrespect towards any character or occupation by these expressions and comparisons. I only wish to impress on my readers, and apply in the present instance, a common and well received opinion, that men exclusively bred to one kind of business, are but illy qualified for another wholly different both in principles and practice. Would it not be an absurdity bordering on madness, to appoint a common mechanic, shopkeeper, or merchant, to preside in a high court of justice, to inculcate theological truths from the pulpit, or to fill the chair of a medical professorship? And to what end would a judge, a divine, or a physician, be called to superintend the building of ships, the construction of houses, or the transactions of an extensive mercantile concern? But equally preposterous in itself, and much more injurious in its consequences, is the practice of appointing characters promiscuously from the common mass of our citizens, to perform the arduous and important duties which necessarily devolve on our board of health. Without meaning to call in question either the uprightness or benevolent intentions of that body, I have no hesitation in declaring my belief, that it now is, and for ever will be, under the present establishment, a source of mischief to the city of Philadelphia. It were much better to have no board at all, than to have one incompetent to the fulfilment of their duty. For, as error is worse than ignorance, so is the maltransaction of public concerns more injurious than the total neglect of them. I am persuaded there are but few enlightened characters among us, (provided they have had an opportunity of observing for themselves) who will not concur with me in opinion, that it would have been better, much better, for the city of Philadelphia, had the members of our present board of health been obliged to remain silent and inactive since the beginning of last July, instead of persevering in the measures which they adopted, no doubt from laudable, but mistaken views.

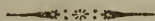
But there are yet other points in which the constitution of our board of health is unwise and faulty in a high degree. The members of that body are too numerous, they continue in office too short a period of time, and they receive no compensation for their services. The joint effect of three considerations so weighty as these, is sufficient to destroy the utility of any establishment.

A numerous executive council, on whatever subject it may be called to exercise its powers, is proverbially slow, feeble, and inconsistent in its measures. Besides the contrariety of opinion, and consequent tardiness in execution, which are necessarily attached to such a body, numbers lessen the weight of individual responsibility, and in that way prove favourable to indolence and neglect.

The contracted period of time for which the members of the board of health receive their appointment, precludes them from ever becoming competent to such an important trust. Before they have acquired a knowledge of even the rudiments of their duty, they retire again into private life, and make room for others equally ignorant and unqualified with themselves. However pure in principle, and captivating in theory such frequent rotations in office may appear, the practice is certainly unfavourable both to deliberative and executive acquirements. Were the same individuals to continue members of the board for several years instead of one, they might then be able not only to gain useful knowledge themselves, but also to bequeath it to their successors, as a valuable legacy.

With regard to a compensation to the members of the board of health, as an acknowledgement for the risk they run and the services they render, little need be said either to unfold the justice, or inculcate the expediency of such a measure. Persons of opulence and leisure will not accept of an appointment so troublesome and hazardous, and men of moderate fortunes, who subsist by their business, cannot be expected to consume their time in gratuitous services to their fellow-citizens. The health law will never be executed with energy and effect, till the officers to whom this trust is confided receive such a salary from the public as to render them alike independent of the smiles and frowns of individuals. As things now stand the board of health are, in some instances, obliged to shrink from their *public duty*, least in the performance of it they might give such offence as would ultimately injure them in their *private concerns*. Nor have we any right to complain of them for proceeding thus cautiously. It is unreasonable and ungenerous to exact from men private sacrifices in the performance of mere official duties, for which they receive neither gratitude nor reward. Nor are such independence and magnanimity the natural growth of the sordid principles and interested maxims of modern times.

A PHILADELPHIAN.



That part of our health law which regulates the business of quarantine embraces objects, interests, and rights, not only intricate, but even opposite in their natures, and therefore difficult to be duly adjusted. While this instrument ought to make ample provision for the security of our city from the importation of disease, it should do it by means of such a wise and equitable policy, as not unnecessarily to infringe on the rights and interests either of merchants, or of those employed in the navigation of vessels. For if such impediments be thrown in the way of our commerce, as not only to embarrass it, but either to destroy it, or divert it ultimately into other channels, it is of little consequence whether this be done by the repeated occurrence of malignant fever, or by the unwise and oppressive restrictions of a health law.

It is not my intention to call in question the efficacy of our health establishment, relative to the *mere exclusion of external contagion*. Its provisions, if executed with fidelity and carried to their proper extent, are no doubt sufficient to guard us from danger on that quarter. But I contend that it is extremely deficient in the secondary branch of its provisions; for it is unnecessarily oppressive and therefore unjust in its influence on commerce. It is

calculated to sacrifice the best interests and rights of the merchant and seaman, to apprehensions neither deducible from reason nor founded on experience. Abundant evidence of the truth of this assertion may be collected from the beginning of the fifth till the close of the ninth section of the health law. Best I might misrepresent the meaning of this part of the law by attempting a summary of it, I must beg the attention of the reader to the following extracts.

“*SEC. 5. And be it further enacted, That all ships and vessels, as well vessels of war as merchant vessels, arriving at the Lazaretto from any port or place in the Mediterranean, or the seas or waters connected with the same, to the eastward of the straits of Gibraltair, or from the coast of Africa without the straits of Gibraltair, and the territory of the same, and the ports of Africa other than the Cape of Good Hope, in the Indian ocean, and from the main land of north or south America, or the West India islands, between the latitude of the river St. Mary in Georgia, and the beginning of the latitude of thirty degrees south of the equator, and from Batavia in the Island of Java, from the fifteenth day of May to the first day of October, shall there be detained at anchor, and discharge the whole of their cargoes and ballast, which together with the vessels, bedding, clothing, and every other article on board, which may be supposed capable of retaining infection, shall be perfectly cleansed and purified, under the direction of the resident physician and quarantine master, at the cost and charge of the owner or consignee, agreeably to such rules and regulations as the board of health shall, from time to time direct for that purpose; and when any of the said vessels, cargoes, bedding, clothing, or other articles shall be effectually cleansed and purified, the resident physician and quarantine master, upon receiving the full amount of the expense and charges for storing, keeping, cleansing, and purifying the same, shall make re-delivery thereof to the captain, master, owner, or consignee of the ship or vessel, in which the same were imported, and deliver to the captain, or master of the said ship or vessel, the certificate of facts to be presented at the health office as aforesaid, and discharge from quarantine such of the crew or passengers of the said ship or vessel, as may be in a healthy state, provided the said vessel shall have been at least fifteen days under quarantine,” &c. &c.*

Were we to search the records of legislation in every country from the remotest period to the present time, we would perhaps be unable to find a section of a law more defective in wisdom, and more lame in expedients for the accomplishment of its purposes than the preceding. Nor could we produce a more instructive instance of the folly of a deliberative assembly attempting to frame rules and regulations on a subject with the nature of which they are totally unacquainted.

The feeble and blind policy displayed in this section makes no discrimination between a healthy and a sickly, nor between a clean and a foul vessel. The port or even country from which she had sailed, or at which she had accidentally touched, is the only point that appears to have been considered as worthy of attention. Yet this, instead of being the first, ought certainly to have been among the last considerations, to influence the decisions of a legislative body, engaged in deliberations on such a subject. What completes the folly and absurdity of this section is, that some of the places mentioned in it as dangerous on account of their contagious and pestilential diseases, are among the healthiest spots on the globe. *The state and condition of a vessel, her cargo, and crew, are the only circumstances that should determine the policy of subjecting her to quarantine and purification. If a vessel be foul, if her cargo be damaged, or her crew affected by a malignant and a contagious disease, (no matter from what place or latitude she last sailed) she should by no means be admitted into the port of Philadelphia. \*Filth imported from Hamburg, from the Baltic, or even*

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*\* Let the following narrative, the truth of which can be substantiated by evidence the most incontestible, serve as a memorable and impressive example, of the mischief that may result from a foul and unventilated vessel. Some time in the autumn of the year 1801, the brig *Esperanza* arrived in the port of Philadelphia with a healthy crew, and without having previously had any sickness on board.*

from the latitude of St. Petersburg, is as offensive in its qualities, and as noxious in its nature, as that introduced from Cape Francois or Batavia; and it is well known that warm climates are not the only places where malignant and infectious diseases originate and prevail.

When a vessel even from a sickly port in the West Indies arrives at our Lazaretto, provided she has had no disease among her crew or passengers, and provided also she be herself clean, and her cargo sound and free from any reasonable suspicion of infection, where is the necessity or even policy of subjecting her to a tedious and expensive quarantine? Is it not worse than useless, is it not an act of cruelty, to adopt such a measure, when there is a strong probability that fifteen days confinement and idleness on board a vessel, subject to the chills of the night, the fogs of the morning, and the intense action of the midday sun, will generate disease among the most healthy and robust seamen? Has a vessel under such circumstances ever introduced disease from a foreign country either into this or any other port? The most zealous and ingenious advocate for importation and indiscriminate quarantine will shrink from an attempt to support the affirmative of this question. A vessel that has remained healthy both while in a foreign port, and during a subsequent voyage of three or four weeks through the pure and breezy air of the ocean, can no longer be regarded as an object of danger. Why, then, as soon as she has been duly examined by the proper officers, and found to con-

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*She was laid up for the winter in a large dock adjoining Mr. West's wharf, a short distance to the northward of Vine street. In this situation she lay, without being either cleansed or ventilated, till within a few days of the appearance of the late malignant disease in that neighbourhood, which is known to have occurred early in the month of July of the present year (1802.). Two men who were employed in first opening her hatches were almost suffocated by an eruption of foul and foetid air from her hold. A large quantity of putrid, dark, and most offensive bilge water was discharged from her by her pumps. John Edwards, a ship carpenter who worked on board of her was the first victim to the disease which soon afterwards spread through the part of the city where she lay. All the other persons, who were in the first instance attacked by that complaint, were near enough to the Esperanza to inhale the pestilential vapour which issued so copiously from her bilge water and hold. Notwithstanding all the idle clamour which has existed, and the proofs which certain gentlemen have attempted to adduce to the contrary, there was no other vessel in that neighbourhood which could be reasonably suspected of giving rise to disease.*

*Between the tenth and fifteenth of July this vessel (the Esperanza) was removed from the dock near Vine street, where she had so long lain, and brought to at a wharf near Chesnut street, where there had not previously been a single case of disease. In this place she continued about half a day, and was then, at the remonstrance of a physician, ordered away by the board of health. Within a very short time afterwards there occurred several deaths from malignant fever in the vicinity of the wharf from which she had been last removed. This vessel now dropt down the river (I think) as low as Marcus Hook, where she lay about fifteen days. She then returned to the city, by permission from the board of health, and came to at Hamilton's wharf, a little above the Drawbridge, for the purpose of taking in freight. She had not lain in her new station many days, when malignant disease again made its appearance in some of the adjacent houses, carried off several persons very suddenly, and spread an alarm through the whole neighbourhood.*

*Such is in brief the history of the Esperanza. Nor is it in the power of any one either to subvert or silence the facts which it exhibits. Perhaps no vessel that ever entered the port of Philadelphia furnished so strong a ground for being suspected of giving origin to disease. She touched at only three places in the city, namely, near Vine street, Chesnut street, and the Drawbridge, and, faithful as the shadow to the substance, malignant fever was her inseparable companion. But she had not lately arrived from any of the places designated in the fifteenth section of our health law. This is the true cause why such efforts have been made to transfer all suspicion and odium from her to the St. Domingo Packet.*

tain nothing of a suspicious nature, is she not suffered to proceed immediately to her place of destination? The interest and profit of the merchant demand this, and the safety of the community does so forbid it. It is well known that by acting on these enlightened and discriminating principles of quarantine, our neighbouring states preserve the commerce of their ports unsarated, while their cities remain at least as free from disease as our own.

If a vessel be actually a repository of febrile contagion, fifteen days constitute too short a period for the purification of herself and crew. The truth is well as the reason of this must be obvious to every one acquainted with the nature and phenomena of contagious diseases. We know that the virus or poison of such complaints lies dormant in the human system for thirty to thirty days. Suppose, then, one or more of the crew of an infected ship (and the supposition is a very admissible one) receive this poison during the time they are engaged in her purification at our Lazaretto. Fifteen or twenty days afterwards these men are released from quarantine and suffered to mingle with the inhabitants of our city. Within five days further they are attacked by a malignant and contagious fever, the seeds of which had remained inactive for twenty days. In such an instance as this what avails the previous shelter and mockery of quarantine? If the existence of febrile contagion in a vessel be clearly ascertained, her quarantine, in order to be satisfactory and effectual, ought to continue at least *thirty days* from the time of her purification. But, when a vessel is clear of contagion and all other visible sources of sickness, it is impolitic, unjust, and cruel, to subject her owner to the cost and her crew to the vexation and hazard of an irksome and expensive quarantine. It is as useless and unmeaning in itself, and as injurious in relation to commerce, to quarantine a vessel of this description, merely because she has arrived from the West Indies, Asia, or Africa, as it would be had she come from the continent of Europe.

"SEC. 9. *And be it further enacted*, That it shall be the duty of the resident physician, immediately on the arrival of any ship or vessel liable to be detained at the Lazaretto, in order to be cleansed and purified as aforesaid, to cause the *sick*, if any on board, to be removed to the building which shall be appointed by the board of health for their reception, and diligently and impartially, with his best skill, attend upon and administer medical assistance to each and every sick person that shall be therein lodged, and generally superintend and cause to be executed such orders and regulations as the said board shall, from time to time, ordain for the government and management of the Lazaretto, and the vessels and cargoes and persons under quarantine."

It is not sufficient simply to denominate the policy manifested in this section unwise and inexpedient; it deserves to be branded as barbarous and inhuman. It would incorporate well with statutes and ordinances passed in certain European countries during the ages of darkness and superstition, but is a stain on the legal code of Pennsylvania, so remarkable for its wisdom, mildness, and humanity. Provision is here made for the relief of the *sick* that may be on board an infected vessel arriving at our Lazaretto, while the *healthy part* of the crew are blindly or wantonly abandoned to their fate. The former are directed to be removed to pure and wholesome accommodations on shore, but the latter, instead of being indulged in similar privileges, are to be closely confined to a vessel supposed by the law to be replete with deadly contagion. This is but one degree better than the murderous edict formerly passed in London during the rage of pestilence in that place, dooming both the sick and well of families to be shut up in infected houses, and abandoned to promiscuous and almost inevitable death. Nor can there be a well founded reason assigned, why such rigorous measures should be adopted at our Lazaretto. On the other hand both humanity and sound policy require, that during the quarantine of an infected vessel, the whole of the crew should be furnished with clean and airy accommodations *on shore*, and not be suffered to be on board a greater proportion of their time than is absolutely necessary for the purpose of cleansing and purifying her. As men are most liable to be affected by malignant and contagious fevers during the relaxed hours of sleep, the precautions here recommended, would both afford the crew the best possible chance to

escape contagion, and, at the same time, contribute in the most effectual manner to the purification of the vessel. For what can so certainly perpetuate contagion in a ship, as the successive sickening of her crew on board? I appeal to the professional knowledge of physicians, as well as to the good sense of my enlightened fellow-citizens, whether or not the strict confinement of fifteen or twenty persons, during as many scorching days and either chilly or sultry nights, on board a vessel subject to the action of marsh effluvia, be not a measure much better calculated to generate than to destroy infection and disease? From every one of reflection and discernment I am authorized to expect an affirmative answer.

It would be impossible, within the limits I have assigned to these essays, to pursue our health law through all its details. Nor does such a step appear necessary, as the subordinate provisions of this instrument, though too numerous, complex, and formal, cannot prove a source of any radical or extensive mischief.

In entering on the present series of hints and remarks, my chief objects were, *first* to state a few objections to certain leading principles and prominent features in our health establishment, and *secondly*, to endeavour to show in what way the evils thence arising may be remedied. Having feebly and in part accomplished the former of these views, the latter will form the subject of a concluding number.

#### A PHILADELPHIAN.

Having finished my remarks on the insufficiency, and mischievous tendency of our existing health law, it is now time to pass from the business of censuring to that of recommending. Conscious that it is much easier to detect and expose errors and faults, than to substitute salutary alterations and amendments, I enter with diffidence on the present essay. But little conversant with the theory, and an entire stranger to the practice, of legislation, seldom accustomed to read and never on any occasion to draft a law, it is not my intention to attempt a digested and complete form of an act for the establishment of a health system for the city and port of Philadelphia. Leaving legislative formalities and technicism to characters skilled in that kind of writing, I shall endeavour briefly to unfold some of the leading principles which such an instrument ought to embrace.

Agreeably to certain remarks, and propositions contained in my preceeding numbers, there are four objects that ought in a particular manner to engage the attention of the legislature in framing a health law suitable to the exigencies of our city and port. These are *1st*. The establishment of a committee of health competent in point of talents and information, to the high trust reposed in them, and invested with a proper degree of legal authority. *2ndly*, The organization of a rigid and extensive system of internal cleanliness. *3dly*, A well regulated quarantine of infected vessels, cargoes, and persons. And *4thly*, A proper disposition and treatment of the healthy part of the crews of vessels during their detention at our Lazaretto. I shall proceed to the consideration of these four divisions of my subject in the order here stated.

*1st*, As it is impossible for a health law to make specific provisions for every object and exigency that may require attention, the committee of health must necessarily possess a great latitude of discretionary powers. In order to be able to exercise these powers with credit to themselves and with safety and advantage to the community, they should have a perfect knowledge of the nature of the business in which they are engaged. Ignorance is a necessary source of error and mischief in executive functions. But it has been already remarked that the leading objects of the health law are exclusively of a scientific and professional nature, and it is easy to discover that the profession alluded to is that of medicine. I need hardly add, that, as divines are the ablest masters of theology, and judges most profoundly learned in law, so none but physicians have a perfect knowledge of medical subjects. It appears, therefore, to be one of the plainest dictates of common sense, that our board of health should consist in part of *medical characters*. In no other way can it even become competent to the performance of its various and extensive duties.

In no other way can its proceedings be rescued from the heavy charges of inconsistency, error, and mischief. Physicians possessing a knowledge of the causes and nature of malignant diseases, and being able to calculate rationally with regard to the probability of their spreading, are most competent to superintend the removal or prevention of the one, and to devise measures for arresting the progress of the other; or, in case of the latter issue being unattainable, to apprise their fellow-citizens of the proper time to secure themselves from danger by retiring into the country. Had there been a few physicians of respectability incorporated in our present board of health, the memorial of *general* alarm published in the beginning of last August, to the terror and incalculable injury of our city, would never have been suffered to make its appearance. In New-York and Baltimore the health establishments are superintended by medical characters. But I blush for Philadelphia on comparing the enlightened views and regular proceedings of those institutions with the inconsistency and want of knowledge which characterize the proceedings of our own. In those cities commerce is never interrupted except during the existence of real and imminent danger; while with us, an idle rumour, a mere phantom of disease, is sufficient to destroy the business of a whole season. Of the truth of this the present year furnishes a melancholy and memorable example.

But in reply to these observations it may probably be said, that the physicians of Philadelphia differ among themselves with regard to the origin of our malignant epidemics—that while some of them consider these diseases as the offspring of domestic causes, others believe them to be imported from abroad—and, that while some esteem them highly contagious, others deny that they are ever communicated in this way from one person to another. Whence, then, it may be continued, would be the advantage of committing the superintendence of the health of our city to characters, whose jarring opinions and public controversies, have only tended to invelophe the true source of our diseases in confusion and uncertainty?

It must be acknowledged, that, on a hasty and superficial view of things, this objection appears reasonable and weighty. But, when the subject is maturely considered, the very difference of opinion here stated to prevail among our medical characters, constitutes an additional reason why they should form a part of our board of health.

It was remarked in a former number, and it is believed that the truth of the remark will be universally acknowledged, that even admitting yellow fever to be imported in the form of human contagion, it requires for its propagation a contaminated atmosphere. But this contamination is the result of the putrefaction of organized substances. Exclude foreign contagion by a strict quarantine, says one party of our physicians, and yellow fever can never again appear among us: let us, replies the other, purify our atmosphere by a strict and extensive system of internal cleanliness, and the disease, though introduced, can never spread. Here, then, we find, at least in public opinion, if not in the nature of things, ample ground for bringing into action the principles both of the importers, and of those who advocate the doctrine of domestic origin. The principles of the former operate to the exclusion of a foreign enemy by means of walls and fortifications, those of the latter to place our forces in such a state of preparation as to be able to destroy him the moment he commits an unwarrantable encroachment,

In such a state of things as this, the true policy with regard to the constitution of our board of health, must be obvious to every one. It consists in incorporating with the board an equal number of physicians of each sect; of those who believe in the domestic origin of yellow fever, as well as of those who consider this disease as a foreigner. Thus united under the same establishment, these characters, instead of provoking mutual hostilities by pursuing their own principles exclusively and to the extreme, will, from motives of prudence and policy, immediately negotiate an amicable compromise. The believer in domestic origin will co-operate with the importer in the due execution of an external quarantine, while, in return for this liberality, he will receive aid and support in purging the city from internal filth. Another feature of this co-alition will be, a generous emulation in each party to render

their respective principles and opinions conspicuous, which will lead to a more strict and able execution of the health law, than could be expected from men, not jealous of each other, and actuated by views precisely alike.

There have been still further objections made to the present constitution of our board of health. It has been remarked that the members of that institution are too numerous, that they are appointed for too short a time, and that there is something unjust and even oppressive in their being obliged to neglect their own private business, and devote their time to the public, without the smallest compensation for their services. To remedy all these evils at once, I beg leave to propose the following plan.

Let the appointment of the members of the board of health be (if not permanent) at least for a term not less than six years, and then let only a part of them go out of office at once, so that the board may never be left destitute of the aid of actual experience. In consideration of their trouble, services, and loss of time, let them receive, like our other officers of police, an annual salary out of the funds of the city, and let their number be reduced from twelve to seven; that is, three from the city, two from Southwark, and two from the Northern Liberties. Of these seven let four be physicians, viz, two from the city, and one from each of the aforesaid districts, and let them be equally divided in their opinions respecting the origin and nature of yellow fever. Let the two importing physicians have the principal superintendence of the business of quarantine, while those who believe in domestic origin should take a similar lead in that of internal cleanliness. As this, however will fall under the private regulations of the board, it is not necessary that it should be provided for in a legislative act.

In such a state of arrangement as is here recommended, places of trust would be consigned only to characters qualified to perform the duties attached to them. It is reasonable and right, that, that part of the police of cities which relates to the preservation of public health should be under the direction of medical characters. No other description of men can be equally calculated to do justice to such a charge. A large and populous city situated in a warm climate is a valetudinary body, which, for the prevention of disease in the summer and autumnal seasons, stands constantly in need of medical attention and advice. Nor let it be supposed that a base and sordid principle of self-interest would lead physicians to recommend such measures as would tend rather to invite than to prevent general and malignant sickness. Leaving the deep criminality of such conduct out of the question, it is a truth, that, even in a pecuniary point of view, the faculty of Philadelphia are among those who suffer most by the occurrence of yellow fever. Physicians feel, therefore, a common interest with the rest of their fellow-citizens, in endeavouring to avert the ravages of this disease.

2dly. The next object in a health establishment for the city of Philadelphia is, the organization of an efficient system of internal cleanliness. On this subject the health law cannot be expected to be express and specific, because it is impossible for the wisdom of any deliberative body to foresee and provide against all the sources of pollution that may occur in a large and populous city. Much, therefore, as formerly remarked, must be left to the discretion of the committee of health. Nor is there any cause to apprehend mischief from the abuse of such discretionary powers, provided this body be composed of characters of principle and discernment. As all the noxious filth of our city is not exposed in streets, alleys, docks, sewers, and other public places, the committee should be authorized to examine cellars, yards, privies, and all such private apartments as may be reasonably suspected of uncleanness. However obnoxious the delegation of such an extent of power may appear to some, it is absolutely necessary to the decency, comfort, and health of large cities. For, though the pride of our nature may create in us a wish to disbelieve the fact, it is notwithstanding true, that a considerable portion of every community must be compelled to be cleanly in their dwellings, no less than honest in their transactions, else will they be alike delinquent in both.

Under this head it is proper to observe, in particular, that during the hot and sickly months, no vessel from whatever port she may have arrived, and what-

ever may be the soundness of her cargo, and the healthiness of her crew should be permitted to pump out her bilge water and air her hatches. Such a practice may not only prove injurious to health, but is extremely unbecoming, and offensive to the senses. \*It is necessary, too, that the committee of health should be invested with legal powers to enforce all such measures of cleanliness and purity, as may be esteemed conducive to the general good.

3<sup>ly</sup>. A well regulated quarantine of infected vessels, cargoes, and persons, is, in the public estimation, an object of primary consequence towards preserving the health of our city. But in the organization of this branch of a health establishment, measures should be adopted essentially different from those indiscriminating and oppressive regulations, which now disgrace the port, and if continued will ultimately ruin the commerce of Philadelphia.

It has been already seen, that, from the fifteenth of May till the first of October, all vessels, whatever be their state and condition, arriving at our Lazaretto from certain specified places, are, together with their cargoes and crews, subject to a quarantine of at least fifteen days. But nine out of ten, or even nineteen out of twenty, of such vessels are free from all suspicion of contagion and other sources of sickness, as will be testified by the officers of quarantine themselves. How unjust, cruel, and oppressive then, to detain under a heavy expence nineteen cleanly and innocent vessels, because the twentieth may chance to be foul and dangerous! Such an unreasonable and unprecedented practice is worse than the evil it is intended to obviate. The true policy on this subject is too obvious to be mistaken by any one. It consists in permitting all vessels, after having undergone a due examination at the Lazaretto, to pass immediately to the city, except such as, either from their existing or previous state and condition, appear to threaten the health of the inhabitants. Such is the policy which, while it erects a sufficient barrier against the introduction of foreign disease, leaves the commerce of New-York and other neighbouring seaports unfettered.

But, as many of our citizens, and even some of the faculty hold it extremely difficult if not impracticable, to ascertain, by a mere examination, whether a vessel be infected or not, I beg leave to propose another mode of quarantine, equally compatible with the health of the city, and much less injurious to the interests of the merchant than that which now exists. This consists in shutting our port entirely against all vessels from the West Indies and other sickly places, from the middle of May till the first of October. All vessels, however, whose crews are not affected by malignant disease, and which have no articles of a suspicious nature on board, should, immediately after examination at our Lazaretto, be allowed to discharge their cargoes into lighters for the purpose of being conveyed to the city and to receive freight through the same channel and at the same place, in order to proceed again to sea, without any quarantine or needless detention. By thus entirely excluding vessels and their crews, and permitting all pure and undamaged cargoes to enter our port in lighters, without unnecessary restrictions and expensive delay, the health of our city will be sufficiently guarded from foreign disease, and the interests and rights of our mercantile characters no longer sacrificed for the purpose of averting imaginary dangers.

4<sup>thly</sup>. Setting policy and interest entirely out of the question, humanity itself calls loudly for new arrangements respecting the healthy part of the crews of such vessels, as may, in consequence of having sickness on board, be forced to perform quarantine at our Lazaretto. It is provided in our health law, as already observed, that on arriving at the quarantine station, the sick shall be removed from infected vessels, and receive all necessary medical attention on shore, while those in health, whether sailors or passengers, are strictly confined on board, subject to the action of all such

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\* Nor should any vessel be permitted, during the aforesaid months, to lie at our wharves without having her hatches, and air-ports (provided she has any) thrown open daily for the purpose of ventilation. Air confined for a length of time, either in a house, a vault, or the hold of a vessel, is known to acquire deleterious qualities. There can be no doubt but the diseases of seamen are frequently attributable to this

causes as had contributed to produce disease in their shipmates. It is unnecessary to dwell on the utility or utility of such a measure. Our language scarcely furnishes terms sufficient to paint it in its true character. It is but little better than the cholera and miasmatic practice, which has sometimes disgraced nations at war, of shutting up captives in crowded prison-ships, to suffer by famine and pestilence disease.

The mode of reforming this part of our health establishment is obvious and easy. It consists in providing suitable accommodations on shore for the crews and passengers of such vessels as may be subjected to the performance of quarantine. Seamen and others, as well as liable to contract disease from foul ships at our Lazaretto, as they would be if such vessels were permitted to come to our wharves. Till infected ships are thoroughly cleansed, dried, and ventilated, none of the hands should be suffered to sleep on board, except as many as may be necessary for the security of the vessels. The others, having been engaged throughout the day in the business of purification, should be allowed to pass the night in an uncontaminated atmosphere on shore. The trifling expense attendant on these arrangements ought never to be set in competition with the preservation of the health and lives of our seamen.

I have, thus, finished my remarks on a subject, which involves every thing that is dear and valuable to my fellow citizens. I can truly say, with the eloquent Roman, that I would have gladly resigned the part I have taken to any other person, but at the same time chose to embark in it myself, rather than suffer a matter so important to pass unnoticed. The reader is entreated not to consider what is here advanced as intended either to teach our legislature positively what they ought to think, or direct them what they should do, in framing a health law for our port and city. He will receive it as a well meant attempt to suggest something useful, but more particularly, to draw forth the sentiments of others better qualified than myself to shed light on the subject. Should even my errors serve as beacons to direct future enquirers in their researches after truth, so far from envying their good fortune, or repining at their success, I shall rejoice in having contributed even by my weakness, to secure the safety and advance the interests of a place, once pre-eminent in the commerce of the West, and still dear to the heart of

A PHILADELPHIAN.

#### CONCLUSION.

Having finished my remarks on the outlines of a health establishment, I beg leave to unfold to my fellow citizens a few of the evils which result from a belief in the *highly contagious* nature of our autumnal epidemics. Nor are these evils, as I trust will fully appear, either few, light, or transient. On the other hand, they are numerous in themselves, extensive in their range, powerful in their operation, and permanent in their effects. From the suffering individual they extend to the whole of our city, from the city to the country we inhabit, nor have they spent their force till they are even felt in distant regions. Let us in a brief and hasty manner trace their footsteps throughout this wide and destructive march.

1st. Of those individuals among us who have the misfortune to be attacked by malignant fever, some are deserted by their connections and friends, who should watch over their wants, and administer to them if not relief at least consolation in their moments of distress, and consigned to the care of mercenary hirelings; while others are unfeelingly hurried, the wife from her husband, the husband from his wife, or the child from the parental attention of both, and conveyed to a distance under the pangs of despondency and the tumult of fever, to be lodged in the solitary or crowded wards of a hospital! The effect of such treatment on a system already shattered by disease and trembling under apprehension, is too obvious to escape the notice of the most undiscerning. It is certainly to be ranked among the most fertile sources of mortality in the complaint we are considering. Further, a dread of being deserted by their friends, or committed to a hospital, frequently prevents patients, during the prevalence of a malignant fever, from making their complaints known even to those around them, till it is too late for their disease to be arrested by the skill

of the physician. Of this I have witnessed many examples. Nor does the private mischief terminate here. There is reason, strong reason to believe that during some of our epidemic seasons, individuals have been consigned to the grave, before the perfect extinction of life! Such is the dereliction of duty, such the outrage on the best feelings and sentiments of human nature, and such the fatal precipitation of interment, to which men are driven by a belief in the *highly contagious* nature of malignant fever!

2dly. To our city at large this belief is no less disastrous than to private individuals. During the existence of even a moderate degree of autumnal sickness, Philadelphia is viewed as a foul and loathsome pest house, with which it is hazardous to hold the slightest intercourse. To such an extent does this sentiment prevail, that many of our citizens who had sought security by deserting their homes, have, even in the surrounding country, been excluded from the rights of common hospitality. I speak from experience; for in the year 1793, I was myself obliged to travel nearly six hours along a dusty road, and beneath a scorching sun, without being able to find any one of sufficient courage and humanity, to approach me with a cup of cool water!

But it is in her foreign relations that Philadelphia suffers most severely from a belief in the contagion of a malignant fever. What is it but this, that prostrates her commerce by occasionally shutting the ports of half the world against her suspected vessels? What is it but this, that has lately confined her shipping for weeks to her own port, waiting for the execution of bills of health? In fine, what is it but this that has produced a threat, that her vessels shall be quarantined not only in the West Indies, but even before the remote and sickly ports of Asia? If we continue to wanton in the extravagance of this belief, and to publish our sentiments on the subject to the world, the time is not far distant, when Constantinople, Smyrna, and Cairo, will deprecate an intercourse with Philadelphia. By a metastasis of error not more absurd than that which has long misled both Europe and America, nations will then withdraw their suspicions from the East, and fix their eyes exclusively on the climates of the West, if not as the birth-place, at least as the hotbed and nursery of pestilence.

3dly. But I have said that not only the whole of our own, but even foreign countries are injured by our belief in the contagion of malignant fever. The truth of this will be obvious to every one acquainted with the nature and extent of mercantile establishments. The late failures in Hamburgh were severely felt in the United States; and so must the failures and embarrassments of merchants in this place in consequence of the suspension of business by means of fever have a similar effect on their connections abroad.

The reader will observe that I reprobate a belief only in the *highly contagious* nature of malignant fever, for (whatever my real opinion may be) it is not my intention to contend at present that the disease is not contagious at all. But that it is not so in any remarkable degree, can be proven by facts and arguments innumerable. It never spreads from the sick to the well in the pure air of the country, nor is it ever communicated even in the atmosphere of the city to more than *one in twenty* of those exposed to it, as is acknowledged by the most strenuous advocates for contagion. But these are far from being the characters of a disease sufficiently contagious to brand us as the pest house of the commercial world. If the contagion of this fever cannot be carried a few miles into the country, and there produce its specific action, how can it be wasted in an active and deleterious state, not only to Europe, but even to our Antipodes on the shores of Asia? The matter, when carried to such an extent, is too absurd to be treated otherwise than with ridicule.

During the late epidemic season, Baltimore furnished a most instructive example of the benefit to be derived from considering malignant fever as a disease not EXPORTABLE by contagion to foreign places. Owing to this opinion being entertained by her board of health (an opinion founded on evidence the most indubitable) her vessels were receiving bills of health which were duly accredited abroad and her commerce going on with but little interruption, while our shipping was either lying under quarantine at our Lazaretto, or in waiting in port for bills of health. If such impressive instances do not open the eyes of the Philadelphians to truth and their own interests, we may exclaim with the prophet, "They are given over to idols, let them alone"!



